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Wednesday, December 19, 2012

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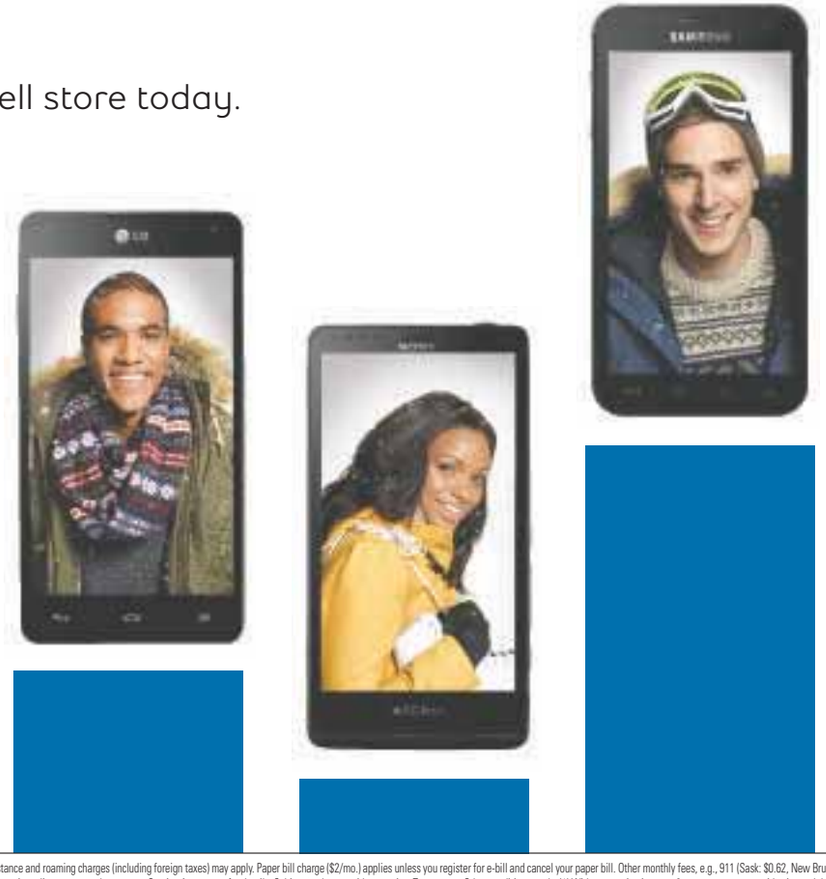

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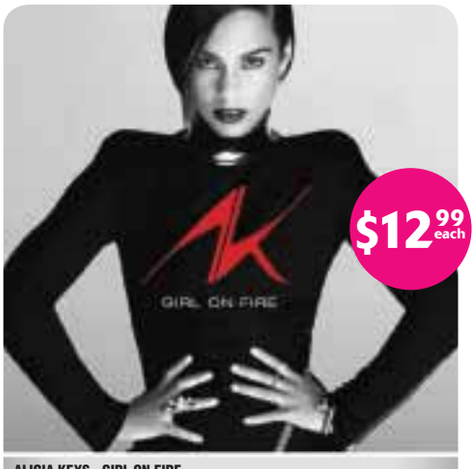

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Nutty for the holidays

Don't have a fire for roasting? Try the barbecue or simply crack open nuts in the shell PAGE 16

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Wednesday, December 19, 2012

News worth sharing.

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Jonesing for January?

ADOPT THIS KITTEN

A recent report from the Canadian Federation of Human Societies says shelters across the country are at, or over capacity in terms of the number of homeless cats they're housing. And the Saskatoon SPCA is no different. There are currently 87 cats up for adoption at the Saskatoon SPCA and roughly 15 more in its Animal Care Centre. January, a 15-week old domestic short-haired cat, is one of the many kittens looking for a new and permanent home.

MORGAN MODJESKI/METRO

Saskatchewan crackles with pop. growth

Saskatchewan is the place to be. Province records largest increase in population since 1921

JANE CAULFIELD
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According to statistics released Tuesday morning, more people than ever are looking to call Saskatchewan home.

Numbers from the Statistics Canada report show that between October 2011 and October 2012 the provincial population grew by more than 23,000 people — the most growth in a single year since 1921.

"This is good news," Premier Brad Wall told reporters on Tuesday. "It's just an indication that many, many people are choosing this province — our province — for economic opportunity and hope and we want to welcome them all to Saskatchewan."

The population boom can be sourced from a variety of areas, including 1,190 people emigrating from other communities across the country.

"We see people having more kids in the province, which is positive. We see more people coming from other provinces, significantly from Ontario.... And we see a significant number of new citizens to the country choosing to make Saskatchewan their home," said Wall.

While growth like this is exciting for the province, Wall is still cautious and said the government will be working hard to ensure the challenges associated with growth are addressed appropriately.

"We need to continue to deal with the challenges related to growth. It's worth restating again that we'd rather have the challenges of growth then the challenges of economic decline," said Wall.

The province released a plan for growth earlier this fall, which includes a target of 1.2 million people living in Saskatchewan by 2020 — a goal, Wall says, the province is lining up to meet.

U.S. politics under the gun

Republicans seem ready to talk about gun control as Obama supports reinstating an assault-weapons ban and the National Rifle Association finally breaks its silence following the Newtown shooting PAGE 4

Instagram slurs lead to riot

Rage over postings of photos of teenage girls labelled 'sluts' and 'whores' ends in violence at a Swedish high school with 27 people arrested and a 17-year-old girl purported to be behind the account in custody PAGE 7

Beckham boy does Burberry

David and Victoria Beckham's 10-year-old son, Romeo, follows in his famous parents' fashionable footsteps, fronting an upcoming campaign for the iconic British luxury brand PAGE 12

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Areas at risk of spring flooding to be monitored, province says

Ken Cheveldayoff, minister responsible for the Water Security Agency, and Judy Harwood, reeve of the Rural Municipality of Corman Park, speak with media on Tuesday at the provincial cabinet office in Saskatoon. The province gave the RM of Corman Park $280,000 to cover the costs of flood-prevention measures in 2011, and says it's paying close attention to regions at risk of flooding this spring. MORGAN MODJESKI/METRO

Getting ready. Water Security Agency will gauge impact of snowfall on flooding in February

MORGAN MODJESKI
morgan.modjeski@metronews.ca

Record-breaking snowfall in Saskatchewan could mean flooding for some areas of the province, but the province says it's taking steps to be prepared.

Ken Cheveldayoff, minister responsible for the Water Security Agency, was in Saskatoon on Tuesday morning to present representatives of the Rural Municipality of Corman Park with a cheque for $280,000 from the Emergency Flood Damage Reduction Program (EFDRP) to cover costs incurred from flood-prevention measures last year.

Cheveldayoff said the province is keeping a close eye on areas that could be affected by spring flooding.

"We always monitor it very closely through the Water Security Agency," he said. "February will be an important time — that's when we'll have an opportunity to gauge what, exactly, the snowfall looks like and what preemptive areas that we can be involved with."

The agency, he said, is "on top of the snowfalls, river flows, everything throughout the province, and at that time, we'll be making recommendations to government as well."

Judy Harwood, the reeve of the RM of Corman Park, said funding from the EFDRP has helped the community deal with the aftermath of last year's floods, but said the community is concerned about more flooding this spring.

"We're hoping to be proactive with this — we know we're going to have some issues," she said. "We're hoping that we can work with our ratepayers and try to help in any way we can to get ready for the situation that we know is going to hit us."

Great deluge of 2011

50

Saskatchewan suffered its worst floods in more than 50 years in 2011, brought on by snowmelt water from the Rockies, intense June rainfall and excessive precipitation during the previous summer, fall and winter.
Source: Environment Canada

Auction action

Auctioneer sets new record for Canadian sales

An Alberta-based auction business has set a new company record and what the firm says is a new Canadian record for sales.

Ritchie Brothers Auctioneers of Edmonton has sold more than $1 billion worth of heavy equipment so far this year — the first time in its 54-year history.

The company held its largest agricultural auction in Saskatoon on Dec. 4. Sales at the event surpassed $30 million in farm equipment.

More than 3,500 registered bidders from 28 countries took part in the one-day sale. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Benefit

Saskatoonians shell out to help refugee claimant

A group in Saskatoon has raised $600 for a man undergoing treatment for cancer while he awaits word on whether his refugee claim will be accepted.

The group staged a benefit on Monday night for Saleem Akhtar, who arrived in Saskatoon this summer from Pakistan but was diagnosed with cancer soon after.

Federal officials refused to provide coverage for parts of his treatment under new rules to prevent abuse of the health-care system, but the province stepped in to provide coverage for his medical needs.

Akhtar is a Christian who fled Pakistan after being shot and threatened by extremists.

He told those at the benefit that, despite his illness, all he cares about is bringing his wife and children to Canada.

Event organizer Nadeem Bhatti said the money raised will help pay for Akhtar's living expenses.
THE CANADIAN PRESS/CKOM/CBC

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Republicans open up to gun debate

Taking the first step. Gun manufacturers see shares continue to drop as politicians on both sides of the aisle shift stances following Friday's shooting

Susan Sheperd wipes a tear as she stands with friends and co-workers as the funeral procession for James Mattioli, 6, who died in the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings, approaches the St. John's Cemetery Tuesday in Darien, Conn. Funerals were held for Mattioli and Jessica Rekos, 6, who were among the 26 people killed when Adam Lanza walked into Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown on Dec. 14 and opened fire. CRAIG RUTTLE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Some Republicans now say they're willing to discuss the politically treacherous issue of gun control, along with mental health issues and violent video games, while President Barack Obama said he supports efforts in Congress to reinstate an assault weapons ban in the wake of last week's Connecticut school shooting.

The massacre, one of the worst mass shootings in U.S history, has rattled the usual national dialogue on guns in America, where public opinion had shifted against tougher gun control in recent years, and the gun lobby is a powerful political force.

Obama has long supported reinstating the assault weapons ban, which expired in 2004, but was quiet on the issue during his first term. He has said he believes the Constitution's Second Amendment guarantees an individual the right to bear arms.

The president was not expected to take any formal action on guns before the end of the year, given the all-consuming efforts to resolve tax and deficit-reduction talks and nominate new Cabinet secretaries.

The most powerful supporter of gun owners, the National Rifle Association, broke its silence Tuesday. After a self-imposed media blackout that left many wondering how it would respond to the killings, it said in a statement that its members were "shocked, saddened and heartbroken by the news of the horrific and senseless murders."

The group also said it wanted to give families time to mourn before making its first public statements. The organization pledged "to help to make sure this never happens again" and has scheduled a news conference for Friday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A complicated issue

"Put guns on the table ... put video games on the table, put mental health on the table."

Republican Congressman Jack Kingston

National poll

A Washington Post/ABC News poll conducted over the weekend showed 54 per cent in the U.S. favour tougher laws, about the same as the 51 per cent in favour earlier in the year. Seven in 10 are opposed to banning the sale of handguns to anyone except law enforcement officers, the highest percentage since 1999.

Quebec. Slain teacher's relatives call American gun laws 'revolting'

The Newtown school massacre has left grieving Canadian relatives of one murdered teacher denouncing American gun laws.

Several of the Rousseau family in Quebec's Eastern Townships will be going down to Connecticut for the funeral of Lauren Rousseau, a substitute teacher whose father was born in Quebec.

"It's revolting how easy it is to obtain firearms — that's what's so infuriating," said the victim's uncle, Francois Rousseau. He and several relatives will be heading down for the funeral of his brother's daughter.

Lauren Rousseau, 30, was born in the U.S. Her Canadian-born father, Gilles Rousseau, told Radio-Canada that he wanted to see his daughter's body but was informed by authorities that it would not be possible.

In a tearful interview, he said the rounds used were so powerful that they ripped through the school's walls and left several holes in his daughter's car outside in the parking lot.

"They told me, 'You can't see (the body),'" Gilles Rousseau told Radio-Canada. "Because most people he shot, it was two or three shots in the face, point-blank." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Mourning uncle

"The only thing I can express is revulsion ..."

Francois Rousseau

Colorado. Woman shot while on phone with police

Four people were found dead Tuesday in Colorado after a woman called police to report a shooting and was apparently shot to death while she was on the phone.

Weld County sheriff's spokesman Tim Schwartz says dispatchers heard the woman who called 911 scream "No, no, no," and then they heard a gunshot. Schwartz says a man grabbed the phone and said he was going to kill himself, and dispatchers heard another shot.

The bodies were found in a home in a subdivision east of Longmont, north of Denver.

The dead included two men and two women, including one who appeared to be in her late teens or early 20s.

Schwartz says investigators have a possible motive for the shootings, but he refused to release details.

He added he didn't think anyone escaped alive, did not know whether all four of the people lived in the home, and was not sure whether there had been any previous calls to police asking for help.

A handgun believed to be the murder weapon was recovered. Police said numerous rounds had been fired from the gun, but further details were not available. They said they are convinced the gunman was one of the victims.

A neighbour, Joyce Vibbert, said she heard three gunshots early Tuesday and got up to look out her bedroom window. She said she couldn't see anything, but she heard a woman screaming. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Neighbour

"I couldn't hear what she was saying. It was just screaming."

Neighbour Joyce Vibbert

Finding normalcy

Children back to school as new Adam Lanza details surface

Children in a school bus pressed their faces to the windows as they watched mourners gather Tuesday for two more 6-year-olds killed in last week's Connecticut school shooting. Most students returned to school for the first time, as the funerals for the 28 dead continued on a grey, wet day.

Security remained high in Newtown, and the small, affluent community was still on edge as the rest of the country prepared for the Christmas holidays. Funerals were held for 6-year-old James Mattioli and Jessica Rekos, among the 20 young students killed. All were 6 or 7 years old.

"There's going to be no joy in school," 17-year-old Newtown student P.J. Hickey said. "It really doesn't feel like Christmas anymore." But he added, "This is where I feel the most at home. I feel safer here than anywhere else in the world."

The mystery of why a smart but severely withdrawn 20-year-old, Adam Lanza, shot his mother to death in bed before rampaging through Sandy Hook Elementary was as deep as ever. The school will remain closed indefinitely.

A Connecticut official said Nancy Lanza, a gun enthusiast who practiced at shooting ranges, was found dead in her pyjamas, shot four times in the head with a .22-calibre rifle.

Investigators say Lanza had no ties to the school he attacked, and they have found no letters or diaries that could explain why he targeted it. He forced himself into the school shortly after its front door locked as part of a new security measure. He wore all black and is believed to have used a Bushmaster AR-15-style rifle, a civilian version of the military's M-16. Versions of the AR-15 were outlawed in the U.S. under the 1994 assault weapons ban, but the law expired in 2004.

Debora Seifert of the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, said both Lanza and his mother fired at shooting ranges and visited ranges together. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

'Defending himself'

Student, 11, brings gun to school

Authorities say an 11-year-old boy caught with a gun at school in Utah told administrators he brought the weapon to defend himself in case of an attack similar to the mass shooting last week at a Connecticut elementary school. School officials say the boy has been arrested on suspicion of possessing a dangerous weapon and aggravated assault after other students told police he pointed the handgun at them. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bushmaster rifles

Firearms maker put up for sale

The largest firearms maker in the United States said Tuesday it is being put up for sale by its owner, which called last week's school shooting a "watershed event" in the national debate over gun control. Freedom Group International makes Bushmaster rifles, the weapons thought to have been used in Friday's killings in Connecticut. Shares in publicly traded gun makers were dropping for a third straight day. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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China cracks down on doomsayers

500 arrested. Police detain members of religious group described as a cult with 'political penchants'

Chinese police have detained more than 500 people from a fringe Christian group for spreading rumours about the world's impending end, state media reported Tuesday.

In China's Qinghai province alone, police arrested more than 400 members from the religious cult group, state-run China Central Television said Tuesday.

Police seized leaflets, videos, books and other apocalyptic materials in the recent arrests of more than 500 people across eight provinces and regions, from the prosperous east coast to less-developed western China.

The detentions come ahead of Friday, Dec. 21 — a date some say the Mayans prophesied would be the end of the world and which was the subject of the apocalyptic movie 2012.

Those detained are reported to be members of the group Almighty God, which is also called Eastern Lightning, after a phrase from the Bible's Book of Matthew.

Widely regarded as a heretical Christian sect, the group preaches that Jesus has reappeared as a woman in central China. It has been accused of targeting Christians, kidnapping and beating them to force conversions.

A public notice on the website of Qinghai provincial government said local police are waging a "severe crackdown" on the group described as a cult with "strong political penchants." The government urged the public to inform the police of any illegal propaganda and gathering by the group.

The CCTV report called the group a cult and accused it of attacking the party and the government, though it did not give any specifics.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Filling the spiritual void

- Chinese society has been in tumult as decades of rapid free-market economic growth discredit communist ideology, loosen social controls and pull hundreds of millions from the countryside to the cities.
- Into the spiritual void have rushed traditional Buddhist groups and Daoist practices, as well as evangelical Christian churches and other spiritual groups, some with unorthodox and apocalyptic visions.
- Eastern Lightning first appeared around 20 years ago, and the official Xinhua News Agency said that its members had "recently latched on to the Mayan doomsday prophecy to predict that the sun will not shine and electricity will not work for three days beginning on Dec. 21."

Building collapse leaves at least two dead in Italy

Firefighters clear rubble after two buildings collapsed overnight in Palermo, Italy, Tuesday. News reports say two people have died and two are unaccounted for. Survivors said a top floor had been added illegally onto one of the buildings recently. A half-dozen families managed to escape the collapse before the walls gave way and tumbled into the street in a heap of cement, furniture and housewares. A dozen people were injured.

FRANCESCO BAIAMONTE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ireland. New law to spell out women's right to life-saving abortions

Ireland's government says it will draft a new law spelling out the right of women to receive abortions in cases where the pregnancy poses a risk to their lives — including from a woman's own threats to commit suicide.

For two decades, successive governments have resisted passing any law in support of a 1992 Supreme Court judgment that such abortions should be legal in Ireland.

Catholic conservatives particularly oppose the suicide-threat justification, arguing it could be used to expand access to abortion beyond relatively rare cases where a pregnancy endangers a woman's life. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Nepal. Mob attacks police for failing to capture killer elephant

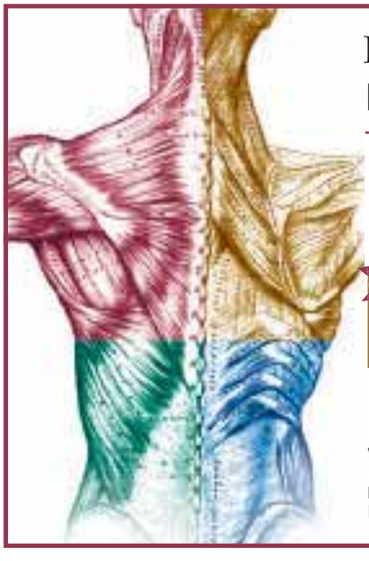
Police in Nepal say angry villagers have attacked a police station while demanding that officers gun down an elephant that has killed at least four people.

Police official Deepak Thapa said hundreds of protesters in the southern district of Chitwan also vandalized police vehicles.

Police fired tear gas to control the mob.

The elephant killed a couple on Saturday and at least two other people last month in the villages bordering the Chitwan forest.

Thapa says soldiers have been sent inside the forest to try to capture or kill the elephant. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



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Manslaughter charges

Man helped wife commit suicide, say police

An upstate New York man was charged with manslaughter in his wife's suicide because he showed the despondent woman how to fire a shotgun before leaving her alone in their home to go hunting, authorities said Tuesday.

Kathie Skellie, 59, was found dead from a self-inflicted gunshot wound Saturday morning at the home she shared with her husband, Willard Skellie, in Glens Fall, said Det. Sgt. Peter Casertino.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Multiple arrests

Frat boys charged in hazing that left freshman dead

Nearly two dozen fraternity members at Northern Illinois University were charged Monday with hazing-related counts after a freshman was found dead at their fraternity house following a night of drinking.

DeKalb police and prosecutors issued arrest warrants for 22 members of the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity in DeKalb. Five members are charged with felony hazing, while the other 17 members are facing misdemeanour hazing charges.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Life without parole

Morbidly obese man spared death row

The decision by Ohio's governor to spare a morbidly obese death row inmate on legal grounds unrelated to the prisoner's weight means executions will likely carry on in the state next year.

Gov. John Kasich on Monday commuted the death sentence of Ronald Post to life without the possibility of parole, sparing him for the 1983 shooting death of Elyria motel clerk Helen Vantz in a robbery.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The scene outside a school in Sweden where a riot erupted after an Instagram account posted images of teenage girls, calling them "sluts" and "whores." HENRIK BRUNNSGARD/METRO SWEDEN

Instagram sex slur sparks riot at school

Anonymous posting. Mounted police move in as anger explodes after teenage girls were called 'sluts' and 'whores'

ARON ANDERSSON
Metro World News in Sweden

An anonymous Instagram account that posted images of teenage girls and called them "sluts" and "whores" has sparked riots outside a Swedish high school.

The account showed more than 200 images of teens reportedly as young as 13.

It contained details of alleged sexual activity.

Hundreds of teens gathered outside Plusgymnasiet high school in Gothenburg where the alleged owner of the account is believed to attend.

Police, some on horseback, went to the school as students threw objects and jumped on cars, witnesses said.

Quoted

"It is insane. It is completely unacceptable to say things like this about people."
Kirsi Niemi, mother of student Janina Niemi

YouTube footage shows a large group scuffling.

At the high school, one girl was hit in the face, another was attacked and kicked by four girls, a witness told Metro.

"The teachers cried out and there was a panic on the whole school. It was so sick," said 17-year old student Janina Niemi, who was in the canteen when the fracas began.

"I saw one girl being kicked in the head. She was on the ground, there were four against one."

Some 27 people were arrested.

A 17-year old girl has been taken into custody. The girl is suspected of having started the Instagram account.

Let Saudi women drive, 3,000 say in key study

Is a ban on Saudi women driving destined to disappear?

That could be the historic outcome if a landmark study helps sway the Muslim kingdom's leaders.

A Saudi online newspaper says more than 3,000 nationals of the kingdom have endorsed a study that recommends lifting a ban on women driving.

The list of backers includes prominent writers and academics.

Sabaq quoted on Tuesday Abdullah al-Alami, a researcher who contributed to the study, as saying it was sent to King Abdullah's main advisory body, the Shura Council, asking it to set a date to discuss it.

Alone in world

Saudi Arabia is the only country in the world where women are banned from driving. Women caught driving face corporal punishment.

Key religious leaders in the ultraconservative kingdom want to keep the practice of not letting women drive.

But some religious scholars have backed a movement to encourage the king to change the laws.

King Abdullah has allowed women to join the Shura Council as well as vote and run in next year's municipal elections.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

No hidden fees

Airfare ads must show total ticket price, feds say

The federal government says advertised airfares for flights originating in Canada must include all relevant fees so the travelling public can easily understand the total cost.

Transport Minister Denis Lebel said advertised prices for the public must include all taxes, fees and other charges so consumers can clearly see the total cost of an airline ticket, with no hidden fees. The "all-in" price doesn't need to include fees for optional services such as in-flight entertainment, meals and baggage, but the price of the options must be displayed. **THE CANADIAN PRESS**

Policy change

Instagram says photos won't end up in advertising

Instagram, the popular photo-sharing service that Facebook bought this year, says it will revise a planned update to its service agreement after confusion about its intent led to widespread user complaints.

At issue is whether users' photos can be part of advertisements, on and off Instagram. The company said in a blog post Tuesday that it has no plans to put users' photos in advertisements. That said, Instagram maintains that it was created to become a business and would like to experiment with various forms of advertisements to make money. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**

Market Minute

DOLLAR
101.45¢
(-0.21¢)

TSX
12,334.34 (+52.99)

OIL
$87.93 US (+73¢)

GOLD
$1,670.70 US (-$27.50)

Natural gas: $3.39 US (+3¢)
Dow Jones: 13,350.96 (+115.57)

Air Canada Rouge takes flight July 1

Discount travel. New carrier will focus on leisure travel market, with destinations in Europe, Caribbean

Air Canada's chief commercial officer Ben Smith, right, and Michael Friisdahl, CEO of Air Canada Leisure Group, second right, unveil new leisure airline Air Canada Rouge in downtown Toronto on Tuesday. AARON VINCENT ELKAIM/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Air Canada is jumping into the low-cost leisure travel market with the launch of its new Rouge airline, which will begin flying on Canada Day to destinations in Europe and the Caribbean.

The airline will start with flights from Toronto to Venice and Edinburgh — two destinations that currently aren't served by Air Canada — and will serve Athens from Toronto and Montreal.

Air Canada's existing flights to Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica and Costa Rica will be flown by the discount carrier from Toronto.

The destinations are areas where demand for leisure travel has been growing, said Ben Smith, Air Canada's chief commercial officer. But many are routes that didn't generate adequate profits under Air Canada's existing cost structure.

"The creation of this carrier is to assist us in serving many destinations that our existing model does not work on a competitive basis," Smith said.

The airline says flights to Venice, Edinburgh and Athens start at "special introductory fares" of $949 round-trip, including all taxes, fees, charges and surcharges.

Flights to the Dominican Republic and Jamaica will start at $269, one-way, while Cuba is offered starting at $538 round-trip. All the introductory fares, which are available until Dec. 25, are based on Toronto departures. **THE CANADIAN PRESS**

BVO. Drink additive is safe, Health Canada says

Major soft-drink makers and Health Canada say the use of brominated vegetable oil in Canadian beverages is safe, despite a growing movement elsewhere to ban its use.

The additive, which is used to cloud and stop separation in some drinks, has been banned in most of Europe for decades and Japan recently discontinued its use. However, BVO continues to be used in popular drinks sold in Canada, including some flavours of Gatorade, Powerade, Fresca, Mountain Dew and Amp Energy Drink.

BVO is classified as a food additive, but there is limited knowledge of its composition, researchers have said. It does contain bromine, which is also in flame retardants and has been found to build up in body lipids. A Health Canada spokesman said there are no health risks associated with BVO when it is used according to regulations, which sets out that 15 parts per million can be used in citrus or spruce-flavoured beverages. **TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE**

A funny thing happens when you tell kids they matter. They believe you.
An alarming 40,000 kids drop out of high school every year. Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada are committed to changing that. They provide a safe and supportive place where kids can develop confidence and life skills. They offer programs like Rogers Raising the Grade™ to help kids with their studies. The Club is a place where kids can drop in, so they're less likely to drop out.
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CUDDLE PARTY MARKS END OF WORLD

JUST SAYIN'
Paul Sullivan
metronews.ca

Looking for something to do the day the world ends?

How about a Cuddle Party? There's one on the Last Day, this coming Friday, somewhere in Calgary. To ward off kuddle krashers, you don't get to know the final location until you pay your 20 bucks and sign up. Then, apparently, you turn up in your pyjamas ready to cuddle. Or not.

WTF? You don't know about Cuddle Parties? Well, let me bring you up to speed. The Cuddle Party is the brainchild of two New York relationship counsellors (you're surprised?), Reid Mihalko and Marcia Baczynski, who started them in their "tiny Manhattan apartment" in 2004. They spread immediately to the Left Coast, and from there to Vancouver and Calgary, the apparent, er, hot bed of Canadian cuddling.

In a nutshell

The idea is to bring a bunch of people together, most of them total strangers, and create a group grope that stays on the disappointing side of sexuality throughout.

Those eastern bastards may have to freeze in the dark, but Calgary has Cuddle Power to keep it warm.

The idea is to bring a bunch of people together, most of them total strangers, and create a group grope that stays on the disappointing side of sexuality throughout.

Organizers are adamant. No sex. According to the Rules (and there are plenty of them), if you get turned on, just wait and it will go away. So they say. Just to make sure: no alcohol or shorts allowed. Pyjamas with drawstrings — this is a lace-free zone.

The first 40 minutes of the event involves a presentation on How to Cuddle, giving leery participants enough time to work up the courage to cuddle some guy you might not care to sit next to on the bus, especially considering the way he's looking at you.

But don't worry! By the end of the evening, you'll have discovered the Joy of Cuddling and will be prepared to cuddle anyone or anything. Or not. One of the features of the Cuddle Party is that it offers participants an opportunity to learn how to say NO in the clinch. Each touch essentially has to be negotiated in advance. If the cuddlee says yes (not yes! yes! yes!) then the cuddler can proceed with some respectful, non-sexual touching.

This advanced course in touching strangers leads to a lot of (painfully) sincere, convoluted language from participant testimonials on the website cuddleparty.com about learning to say no in order to say yes, or is it the other way around? And about how cuddling is not always about sex and various other things guys will say when they hope to get lucky.

Look, I can't think of anything I'd rather do less on my last day on Earth than cuddle with the cast of Portlandia, but that's just me. I can Just Say No, can't I?

But you go ahead and get to yes. Just remember, that's all you're getting.

If you haven't heard of Cuddle Parties yet, get well acquainted. CUDDLEPARTY.COM

This looks a bit fishy

KIM PRESTON/REX FEATURES

'Animal' photography

Plastic shot to look like sea creatures

This image of odd-looking sea creatures would have marine biologists baffled, but it in fact shows an everyday object shot to represent sea animals. The project, titled Plastic Pacific, was created by Australian artist Kim Preston, 33, who wanted to draw attention to the devastating effect of plastic buildup in oceans around the globe. METRO

Artist's viewpoint

"I hoped that the prettiness of the images would draw people in more than if I showed the far uglier reality."

Kim Preston, digital designer and illustrator, 33, from Melbourne
Passionate about the preservation of our oceans, Preston added that "this is a photographically based rant against the irresponsible overuse of plastic. I recently obtained a scuba-diving certificate in Indonesia and seeing all of the plastic caught on the reefs inspired this project."

Process of photograph

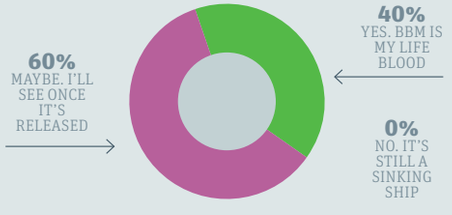
Creativity used to shoot under budget

Shot in her garden shed, Preston used a blue fabric as the backdrop and hung all the objects from a clothes rack while she photographed them. For the shower caps, she would quickly blow into them before snapping a shot with a wireless shutter release. She had planned to shoot the series inside a fish tank, but her lack of budget forced her to become more creative. METRO

Metropolitan Panel

Register at metropolitanpanel.ca and take the quick poll

RIM's BlackBerry 10 is getting rave reviews. Are you buying into the hype?



Twitter

@knownastron: "Look good, feel good, write finals good." That's a saying right?

@SaskGregger: I'm a crumple up some kleenex and shove it in my nostril guy cause it both clears my nose and provides a laugh for others #yourewelcome

@alyssavanthof: Going to the place where love, and feeling good don't ever cost a thing. #Home #Saskatoon

@iChirs: If your solution to Instagram's new policies (which take effect on new photos in 2013) is to post on Facebook you're doing it wrong.

@bohdanonushko: Grey skies and reindeer antlers on a car, standard Saskatchewan #yxe #christmas

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SCENE 2

End of the world viewing

The end of the world may or may not be upon us, but Hollywood has been preparing us for this moment for decades. The higher the stakes, the bigger the drama, and there's no higher stakes than the fate of the entire world. So here's our picks for the best movies about the end of the world.

NED EHRBAR
scene@metronews.ca

1. Children of Men (2006)

Alfonso Cuarón's adaptation of P.D. James' novel about a world unraveling after women stop being able to get pregnant is a masterpiece, a gripping and hyper-realistic look at how society deals with calamity. The real tragedy is how little attention it got upon its release. Watch it now, while you still have time.

2. Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964)

Stanley Kubrick made it OK to laugh in the face of possible nuclear annihilation with this pointed satire of escalation and mutually assured destruction, culminating with Slim Pickens' famous ride on a warhead.

3. Melancholia (2011)

Dazzling visuals and an impressive, against-type performance by Kirsten Dunst buoy this divisive film from Lars von Trier about a family trying to get through a wedding while a rogue planet hurtles toward Earth, threatening total annihilation.

4. The Cabin in the Woods (2012)

Spoiler alert: Drew Goddard's hilarious, twist-filled take on horror movies (co-written by Joss Whedon) is more than it seems.

5. Night of the Comet (1984)

Call it the Omega Valley Girls. In this sci-fi horror-comedy gem, two no-nonsense teenage sisters contend with zombies in the fallout of the titular comet reducing Los Angeles to rubble.

6. Last Night (1998)

A quiet, delightful indie precursor to Seeking a Friend for the End of the World, Don McKeller's film gives a distinctly Canadian look at the end of the world. Toronto residents have had months to prepare, so there's little need for panic.

7. The Road (2009)

A gut-punch of a film, John Hillcoat's screen adaptation is just as chilling and stark as the Cormac McCarthy novel on which it is based. The world may not actually end in this one, but from the looks of what's become of things, it might as well have.

8. Seeking a Friend for the End of the World (2012)

A refreshing take on the asteroid headed to Earth plot, this road movie with Steve Carell and Keira Knightley is surprisingly charming — and features a barrage of comic cameos as the main characters head out across the country with three weeks to live.

9. On the Beach (1959)

Long before CGI could render total destruction in realistic detail, we had Gregory Peck and Ava Gardner waiting out the end in Australia after a global nuclear war in this Cold War-era drama, notable for its non-Hollywood ending.

10. Deep Impact (1998)

In a year that brought competing projects about an asteroid on a collision course with the Earth, the scrappy Deep Impact is actually the superior movie to Michael Bay's bloated, Aerosmith-ballad-filled Armageddon if for no other reason than it gave us President Morgan Freeman. Also, points for casting Elijah Wood.

Week of Armageddon

Check out Metro all week for more stories of apocalyptic proportions.

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‘It’s gonna be cold, it’s gonna be grey, and it’s gonna last you for the rest of your life’

Movies. The classic Bill Murray quote stands the test of time as the latest mid-life crisis movie, This is 40, arrives this weekend

IN FOCUS
Richard Crouse
scene@metronews.ca

Robert Smigel, left, gives advice to Paul Rudd in This Is 40, an unfiltered, comedic look inside the life of an American family from writer/director/producer Judd Apatow. HANDOUT

Forty isn’t old, but Leslie Mann and Paul Rudd, the leads in the new Judd Apatow comedy This is 40, are confronting middle age and not always liking what they see.

Mid-life ruts have supplied the basis for many movies.

The best-known age-angst film has to be American Beauty. Lester Burnham (Kevin Spacey, who won a best actor Oscar for his work) has a classic case of the mid-life blues. Depressed, he allows himself to be pushed around by his employer and his wife and he’s developed an unhealthy crush on his daughter’s friend. To restart his life, he quits his job, blackmails his boss and deals with his wife’s infidelity.

“I feel like I’ve been in a coma for the past 20 years,” he says. “And I’m just now waking up.”

Things don’t work out well for Lester, but weatherman Phil Connors’s (Bill Murray) mid life crisis has a better outcome.

At the beginning of Groundhog Day he’s a drunk, suicide prone curmudgeon who sums up his outlook like this, “I’ll give you a winter prediction: It’s gonna be cold, it’s gonna be grey, and it’s gonna last you for the rest of your life.”

When he starts living the same day over and over again, however, he begins to see the beauty of life.

Bill Murray is also forced to reflect on his existence in Broken Flowers, when he receives a mysterious letter telling him of a son he didn’t know about.

“Well, the past is gone, I know that,” he says. “The future isn’t here yet, whatever it’s going to be. So, all there is, is this. The present. That’s it.”

Mid-life crises aren’t the domain of men, however.

In The Bridges of Madison County, Meryl Streep plays Francesca, an Iowa housewife who shatters the midlife doldrums by having a brief but meaningful affair with National Geographic photographer Robert Kincaid (played by Clint Eastwood). Of her affair she says, “everything I knew to be true about myself up until then was gone. I was acting like another woman, yet I was more myself than ever before.”

The best-loved mid-life movie might be Shirley Valentine, the bittersweet tale of an English housewife who leaves her humdrum existence behind for a happier life in the Greek islands.

“I used to be The Mother,” she says. “I used to be The Wife. But now I’m Shirley Valentine again.”

Movie Review

A Guilt Trip down the middle lane

The Guilt Trip

Director. Anne Fletcher

Stars. Seth Rogen, Barbra Streisand

What made The Guilt Trip an interesting premise also ultimately works against it. Sure, crafting a road-trip comedy with Barbra Streisand as mother to Seth Rogen’s coddled adult son may attract fans from disparate camps, but by skirting down the middle, the comedy ends up compromised for both sides. Ultimately, the Babs side wins as Streisand’s overbearing Jewish matriarch makes Rogen look like he’s just holding back. STEVE GOW/METRO

Carried away and following Kaufman

Paul Banks. Interpol frontman’s second solo album has him channeling his inner comedian

PAT HEALY
Metro World News

Real or fake — this Paul Banks photo had people splitting their gut with laughter. HELENA CHRISTENSEN

Paul Banks wants to let you in on something: That tennis photo is a joke.

“There’s probably a lot of people that see this photo of me looking angry, playing tennis, and they think that I’m serious, or that it’s actually me doing a shot where I think I look cool,” says the Interpol singer, who is touring to promote his second album away from his band. “But I’m kind of a disciple of Andy Kaufman; I kind of like jokes that people don’t get.

“That one-in-10 people gets the fact that something is wrapped up in humour, it’s that much funnier to that person and that’s the person that’s on my wavelength,” he says.

Banks’s humour has historically gotten lost in the mix of a band whose music has thrived off a sense of cryptic disconnect and whose image has most often been projected with a cinematic sophistication. But he says when he is working with Interpol guitarist Daniel Kessler, there’s a different vibe than with his solo material.

“If Daniel presents this incredibly elegant piece of music that evokes certain sentiments and ideas in me, the thing I’m going to gravitate toward is not thinking some sportscaster is hot,” he says. “Whereas when I’m working on my own things I can just be carried by any idea that comes to mind.”

Indeed. On his first non-Interpol album, 2009’s Julian Plenti is ... Skyscraper, Banks did record a song called Girl on the Sporting News. This latest album, simply entitled Banks, features a few tracks that have similarly silly premises, but are presented in ways that casual listeners might take seriously. One track in particular sounds like an upbeat pop song, were it not for him singing, almost mechanically, “I’ll sue you.”

“You might see that as somehow literal,” he says. “But that’s a song where I’m exploring the mindset of someone that I’m totally not. ... That’s very much like that thing that actors say about how playing the villain is fun.”

Interpol

Rumours have been floating around Interpol, as they are prone to do. But Banks wants to put at least one of those to rest while at the same time giving a clear indication of what not to expect.

- **Quote.** While Banks is quick to confirm that Interpol is very much still a band, he is also quick to quell expectations that you might hear any Interpol songs during his set. “That’s so far from being a possibility,” he says. “That’d be really weird, man. Those aren’t my songs. I’m (only) 25 per cent creator and owner of those songs.”

METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Channing Tatum's wife Jenna Dewan-Tatum has a bun in the oven.

ALL PHOTOS GETTY IMAGES

'Sexiest Man Alive' reproducing

Capping off an amazing year that's included several hit movies and a Sexiest Man Alive title, Channing Tatum is now gearing up for fatherhood. Tatum's wife, Jenna Dewan-Tatum, is expecting the couple's first child sometime next year, their rep confirmed to People magazine. And it may not be the last.

"I'm ready. I think she's ready," Tatum recently told the magazine. "The first number that pops into my head is three, but I just want one to be healthy and then we'll see where we go after that."

The Word

Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Beckham?

THE WORD
Dorothy Robinson
scene@metronews.ca

Bend it like Burberry?

It was announced this week that at only 10 years old, David and Victoria Beckham's son Romeo Beckham is the "baby face" of Burberry's spring/summer '13 campaign, joining a long list of models and stars who have fronted ads for the house. "We had such fun shooting the campaign and I think that comes through in the images, which really reflect the upbeat spirit of the collection," Burberry's creative director Christopher Bailey says.

Perhaps Burberry really wanted his dad, David Beckham, but then decided they wanted to go with someone who has more of a mature, male voice?

In other news:
A 2012 coming-out recap

Who: Anderson Cooper, journalist.
How: In an email to blogger Andrew Sullivan.
What was said: "The fact is, I'm gay," Cooper wrote. "Always have been, always will be, and I couldn't be any more happy, comfortable with myself and proud."

Who: Wade Davis, a cornerback who spent four preseasons with three NFL teams.
How: In an interview with Outsports.com.
What was said: "You just want to be one of the guys, and you don't want to lose that sense of family," Davis said about not coming out sooner. "Your biggest fear is that you'll lose that camaraderie and family."

Who: Lee "Uncle Poodle" Thompson, redneck.
How: Just by appearing on Honey Boo Boo.
What was said: Thompson's homosexuality isn't a huge to-do on the show; he's out and proud. As Alana says in the season finale, "ain't nothin' wrong with bein' a little gay."

Zooey Deschanel and Death Cab for Cutie's Benjamin Gibbard are never, ever, getting back together.

Cutie divorce finalized

Zooey Deschanel's marriage to Death Cab for Cutie frontman Benjamin Gibbard is officially over, with the former couple formalizing their divorce in a Los Angeles court last week, just over a month after separating, according to E! News. And the New Girl star appears to already be moving on, having been spotted recently walking hand-in-hand with new screenwriter boyfriend Jamie Linden.

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LIFE 3

This holiday season, think South Pole instead of North

Icy wonderland. While Santa's homeland might be on our minds right now, Antarctica's unspoiled landscape beckons travellers

DOUG WALLACE
life@metronews.ca

Who owns Antarctica? The penguins, of course — several million of them (cute little devils, too). At 1.4 times the size of Canada, the seventh continent to tick off your bucket list is rich with incredible wildlife, pristine vistas and amazing history. With the season stretching from the end of November to the beginning of March, and January temps hovering at zero around the northern part of the Antarctic Peninsula, this trip south could be your chance to be a real snowbird this winter.

The starting gate

The expedition begins with an overnight in Ushuaia, a small city of 65,000 at the bottom of Argentina that bills itself as the "city at the end of the world." Just a few kilometres from Tierra del Fuego National Park, it was originally founded as a prison colony, and the old prison has been converted into a museum complex, which includes a full wing on Antarctica.

The ship

Most of the cruise ships that serve Antarctica are a smaller variety; great for squeezing through ice-filled canals. Toronto-based Quark Expeditions has been ferrying people across the notorious Drake Passage for 20 years, with a comfortably high guest-to-crew ratio and an excellent track record. On-board experts share their knowledge of ornithology, marine biology, zoology and geology with insightful talks during downtimes on the voyage down and back, as well as throughout the trip. Photography courses help guests get that perfect shot, and a wellness program includes yoga classes and massage therapy — both great for relieving backs left sore from a day of hiking and Zodiac boat rides around all the icebergs.

The crowd

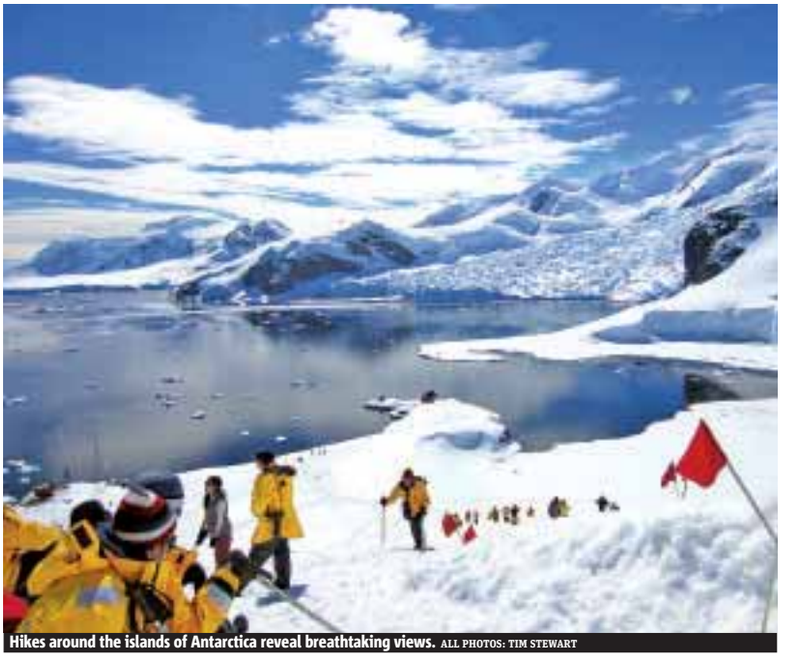
A truly international crowd makes this trek — from the fleece-clad adventurers to the retirees bored with the Caribbean to the young marrieds getting in some travel miles before they start a family.

"Antarctica captures people's imagination regardless of their age, and people come with different goals," says Quark expedition leader David Wood.

Visiting scientists gathering data could well accompany you on your excursions, and are eager to talk about their work. Whether guests are gung-ho adventure types or a "contemplative" group that takes things easier, there is pretty much something for everyone.

The excursions

After two days at sea, when you reach land-ho, out come the Zodiac pontoon boats. Twice daily spins around the various harbours and bays, plus landings on islands that dot the Antarctic Peninsula as well as the continent itself, make for a flurry of activity. Sea kayaking is a great way to interact with the scenery and connect with the water and the wildlife. Penguin colonies, secluded bays of berg-filled waters, lazy seals on thick ice floes, majestic birds, gorgeous glacial ice sculptures, rocky peaks — the photo ops are beyond stunning.



Hikes around the islands of Antarctica reveal breathtaking views. ALL PHOTOS: TIM STEWART

The eco-friendliness

All Antarctica tour operators uphold the same objectives to keep the region as pristine as possible, following directives outlined in The Antarctic Treaty, which was signed in 1959.

Among other things, this involves preventing the introduction of non-native species to the area, be it plants or disease.

Travellers step through a disinfecting boot bath getting on and off the ship. You leave zero evidence of ever having stepped on Antarctica, except for your footprint.

The penguins are the real stars of the cruise, entertaining travellers with their antics.

If you go...

- **Tours.** For 2013-2014, Quark Expeditions has a few new adventures, including a Greenland cruise and a Falklands, South Georgia and Antarctica voyage that departs from Buenos Aires. It features the first-ever Polar Floating Documentary Film Festival, and was just voted one of Wanderlust Travel magazine's 50 Best Trips of 2013. Check it all out at quarkexpeditions.com.

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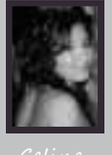
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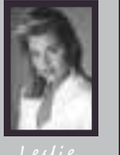
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Darren Parkman has a need for speed at the Las Vegas Motorways. CONTRIBUTED/DARREN PARKMAN

Travellin' Canadian Darren Parkman tries life in the fast lane

Las Vegas. Forget gambling and partying, whizzing around a racetrack in a $300,000 car is one of Sin City's biggest thrills

THE TRAVELLIN' CANADIAN
Darren Parkman
travel@metronews.ca

As if endless bars, glitzy shows, and nerve-racking blackjack weren't enough, there's an even more exciting way to get the adrenaline pumping in Vegas.

How about putting pedal to metal behind the wheel of a $300,000 racing Ferrari?

If you've got the nerve, the skills and several hundred dollars, Dream Racing at Las Vegas Motorways is for you.

A little backstory: My first car was a beloved '73 Pinto, so I'm no Mario Andretti behind the wheel. Still, I couldn't resist the urge to at least pretend I was, and hopefully emerge in one piece.

Located less than a half hour from the strip, LV Motorways is a genuine race track, complete with grand stands and a challenging track. After a brief but intimidating car simulator session, I found myself suiting up and strapping into an honest to goodness real Ferrari F-450 GT race car.

Just the roar of the engine was enough to strike fear into my heart. Luckily, an experienced driver was right beside me in the passenger seat, shouting commands through my headset and telling me when to hit the gas. And hit the gas I did. Ever wonder what it feels like to be inside a launching rocket? I don't wonder anymore.

All the while, my driving instructor is yelling for me to gear up or gear down with the steering column paddle. Probably the single coolest moment was when I took my first corner at full throttle. Whereas most cars would probably roll multiple times at this point, this amazing Ferrari felt like it was glued to the track even on a sharp bend. After getting a bit used to the G-force, I found myself screaming and laughing hysterically as I lapped my opponent, whose driving I felt was a bit too grandma-like.

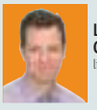
This experience is well worth the price of admission. And I don't miss that Pinto anymore.

Other Las Vegas adventures

- **Indoor skydiving.** Suit up and dive into a tube with a giant fan blasting you upwards. Simulates actual skydiving and free falling. The fan generates winds up to 193 kilometres per hour.
- **Freemont St. zipline.** Soar above the most historic street in Vegas. Flightlinez offers rides for only $20 nightly after 6 p.m.

Stocking stuffers

Traveller on your list? Here are some items guaranteed to please



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DYNAMIC KOREA

Roasting chestnuts on an open fire

THE CANADIAN PRESS H/O

Do people really roast chestnuts?

Yes, says Linda Grimo of Grimo Nut Nursery in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont. But the easiest way to do them is on the barbecue, she says. Nuts have been part of the holiday tradition for centuries, with both religious and pagan origins cited by various sources. Although cooks tend to incorporate them in dishes throughout the year, they are a staple of holiday entertaining.

There are options aside from roasting

Sautéing peeled chestnuts in a frying pan is an alternative to barbecuing. If you boil them briefly first, the nuts will "pop right out" of the skin, says Grimo. She cooks them in butter for at least 10 minutes, adding sugar to caramelize them for a sweet treat or garlic or onions if she wants to add them to vegetable or meat dishes.

Can-uts

The only two types of nuts grown here commercially are hazelnuts and heartnuts — in very small quantities. Peanuts also are grown, but they're not really nuts. They're a legume and part of the bean family. It's a mystery to Grimo. "Nuts are so easy to farm and very profitable," she says. But farmers have been slow to pick up on the opportunity.

Storage

Store-bought nuts in the shell or in jars can be stored at room temperature, but freshly harvested nuts have a high moisture content and need to dry out. Grimo advises people who pick black walnuts, for example, to hang them in a burlap sack in the furnace room for three weeks, preferably with a small fan near them to circulate air through the bag. Chestnuts are the exception and should always be stored in the refrigerator.

The weigh in

Nuts are very good for us, says dietitian Doug Cook, and since they all have different nutrients in varying degrees, eating a variety is best. Ounce for ounce, nuts contain between 150 and 200 calories. The number of servings per person should depend on age, activity level and body weight. **THE CANADIAN PRESS/ DOUG COOK, DIETITIAN AND DIRECTOR OF THE TORONTO CHAPTER OF HEALTHCASTLE.COM.**

Add decadence to your holiday treats

Ingredients

Tart shell
- 375 ml (1 1/2 cups) flour
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) powdered sugar
- 0.5 ml (1/8 tsp) salt
- 125 ml (1/2 cup/1 stick) cold unsalted butter, cut into cubes
- 1 large egg, beaten

Filling
- 250 ml (1 cup) heavy cream
- 250 g (8 oz) cream cheese
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) almond butter
- 125 ml (1/2 cup) honey
- 0.5 ml (1/8 tsp) salt
- 10 ml (2 tsp) vanilla extract

Ganache
- 175 g (6 oz) good-quality dark chocolate, finely chopped
- 75 ml (1/3 cup) plus 30 ml (2 tbsp) heavy cream
- Pinch of salt
- 5 ml (1 tsp) vanilla extract
- 30 ml (2 tbsp) sliced almonds

1. Tart shell: In bowl, whisk flour, powdered sugar and salt. Add butter and quickly rub butter into dry ingredients with pastry cutting tool until incorporated. Add beaten egg and use fork to bring mix together. Dough will be moist, but not wet. Place into a tart pan with a removable bottom. Use fingers to press evenly across bottom of pan and up the sides. Use fork to pierce dough several times. Place in freezer for 1 hour.

2. Place rack in upper third of oven and heat to 180 C (350 F). Grease one side of a piece of foil with butter. Remove tart shell from freezer and press foil into tart shell, butter side down. Bake tart 18 mins. Remove foil and bake 12 mins or until crust is golden brown. Remove from oven and let tart shell cool completely before filling.

This recipe serves eight. THE CANADIAN PRESS

3. Filling: In bowl, whip heavy cream until soft peaks form. Set aside.

4. In bowl of electric stand mixer fitted with a paddle attachment, beat cream cheese, almond butter and honey. Beat until smooth and creamy, ensuring all ingredients are incorporated, about 5 mins. Beat in salt, vanilla.

5. Remove bowl from mixer. Use spatula to stir in one-third of the whipped cream until incorporated. Add remaining whipped cream and fold. Store in refrigerator until ready to use and tart shell is cool enough for filling.

6. Ganache: In bowl, place chopped chocolate. Set aside. Heat heavy cream in microwave until hot and steaming, about 1 minute. Pour cream over chopped chocolate and let stand 30 seconds. Slowly stir chocolate and cream mixture until chocolate is melted and mixture is glossy. Add salt and vanilla extract and stir to combine.

7. Assembly: Smooth filling into bottom of cooled tart shell, creating smooth top. Pour ganache over top and smooth to edges. Sprinkle with almonds and refrigerate 2 hours before serving. **CREATED BY JOY WILSON OF JOYTHEBAKER.COM FOR THE ALMOND BOARD OF CALIFORNIA**

Cocktails of the Week

Fig and Maple

Something about fig and maple syrup just goes together. And when you add a little liquor, you have a delicious and warming combination that is perfect for those nights when you're curled up in front of the fire.

- 2 fresh or dried fig
- 1 tbsp ginger marmalade
- 1 oz hot water
- 2 oz Bombay Sapphire
- 2 oz fresh lime juice
- 2 oz ginger beer
- 1 oz maple syrup

1. In a shaker, muddle fig with ginger marmalade and water. Add Bombay Sapphire, fresh lime juice, ginger beer and maple syrup. Add ice and double strain into glass.

PHOTO AND RECIPE COURTESY BOMBAY SAPPHIRE

Maple Leaf

Your favourite bourbon gets shaken up with a local maple syrup and freshly squeezed lemon garnished with cranberries.

- 1.5 oz Bourbon
- 0.5 oz maple syrup
- squeeze of fresh lemon
- cranberries for garnish

1. Shake ingredients, including fresh lemon with ice.

2. Strain into glass over fresh ice.

3. Float 3 cranberries on top of ice.

4. Add a cocktail straw and serve. **PHOTO AND RECIPE COURTESY OF FIRKIN PUBS, FIRKINPUBS.COM**

Halfway in and having some doubts?

School switcharoo.
It's not uncommon for mixed feelings to make their way into the minds of learners

CHRISTINA PELLEGRINI
TalentEgg.ca

Be cautious of stacking your schedule with similar classes. Try to study a variety of subjects to get a wider perspective and discover your other interests earlier. ISTOCK

So your college or university major isn't what you thought it'd be. Maybe the career opportunities you thought you'd have haven't panned out. Or perhaps you've discovered a new interest.

Fall classes may be over, but there's still time to meet with an academic advisor and change your winter schedule to pursue a new major or specialization.

According to the University of Calgary, the majority of university students switch their majors at least once. Reasons why vary from not being hired to discovering new interests to just plain uncertainty.

What should you do if you're interested in something else?

It's easy to follow your friends, study what your parents tell you to or pursue a career based on how much it pays. But you have to deal with your career choices, Toronto-based community manager Stephanie Fusco says.

Fusco studied politics at Queen's University and hoped to go to law school since she was in high school. But in a fourth-year political communications seminar, she realized that she loved strategy, speech writing and communications more. She graduated from Queen's and later pursued her passion and earned a postgraduate certificate in public relations from Humber College.

"I knew I made the right choice when I found myself putting more effort into my Humber application than I was putting into worrying about whether I'd get into law school," she says. "I'm sure I'm doing what I'm supposed to do and my career is on a path I'm very happy with."

Maybe there's an aspect of your major you love. It may take some reflection or experimentation to figure it out, but try to pursue a degree and a career in the aspect that interests you the most, Fusco adds.

What should you do if you're not sure?

Drawn to different choices

"I knew I made the right choice when I found myself putting more effort into my Humber application than I was putting into worrying about whether I'd get into law school."

Stephanie Fusco
Toronto-based community manager

If you're unsure about your interests or aspirations, choose an undecided major. According to the University of California, students who enter college with an undeclared major change their focus fewer times than students who declare their major. So when you do make a decision, you'll make it count.

What should you do if you weren't recruited this fall?

Many large companies have already filled their entry level or leadership program positions by now. Don't panic if you haven't been hired. Take rejection as an opportunity to assess your interests, goals and options.

When an accounting firm didn't recruit Nick Guadagnolo last year, the then aspiring auditor and fourth-year accounting student at the Schulich School of Business enrolled in organizational behaviour and marketing classes in his final semester instead.

"An accounting specialization without a CA designation was not what I wanted," Guadagnolo says. "I excelled at, and quite frankly derived so much more pleasure from, the not-so-numerical aspects of the BBA degree."

He studied things like sports marketing, crisis management and operating a family business. He wrote the LSAT in June, applied to law school this fall, travelled frequently and continues to work part-time in HR. For Guadagnolo, there is credence to a plan of action that doesn't involve immediately jumping into the fray. It sounds scary now, but maybe the same applies to you too.

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Canadian juniors not sleeping on jet-lag issues

Travel concerns. Trip to Ufa, Russia just one more obstacle on road to world championship

The puck drop for Canada's first three games at the world junior hockey championship in Russia is 3:30 a.m. CST.

Host city Ufa is 10 to 14 hours ahead of the Canadian players' body clocks, depending on what part of the country they're from. A Canadian junior team hasn't travelled this far, or crossed this many time zones, since the 2001 tournament in Moscow. Ufa is another 1,160 kilometres and two time zones to the southeast.

Jet lag and travel fatigue will be major challenges, barriers as significant on the road to gold as the Russians, Swedes and Americans.

Hockey Canada enlisted the expertise of Calgary sleep specialist Dr. Charles Samuels to draw up a plan to combat jet lag and sleep deprivation.

Canadian players, from left, Nathan MacKinnon, Jonathan Drouin and Jonathan Huberdeau look on during team photos last Friday in Calgary. JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

'No screwing around'

The Canadian team is currently in training in Finland, a four-hour time difference from Ufa, Russia. The players were on a strict schedule from the moment the wheels went up on their flight from Calgary on Saturday.

- One of the worst things a team can do, says Samuels, is get on the plane exhausted, but it was inevitable some players would be after selection camp.
- "We really talked about on the flight, eye shades, ear plugs, noise-cancellation headphones, all the pillows and comfort you need and the plane is for rest. No screwing around," Samuels said.

Quoted

"It's basically a survival situation if you look at the frequency of games, the time of the games and then the fact there's virtually no time to recover before the finals." Calgary sleep specialist Dr. Charles Samuels

"I've met with sleep doctors, sports psychologists, neuropsychologists," Canadian head coach Steve Spott said. "I've met with just about every doctor possible."

The accepted rule is it takes a day for every hour of time difference to adapt. Samuels aims to accelerate the adjustment.

Travel fatigue gets less attention than jet lag, he says, but for athletes who travel to far-flung places a lot, it can be damaging to performance. The cumulative effects of extensive travel fatigue the body and mind. Even though the Canadian team is only travelling to Ufa once, the distance and time on planes can catch up with them.

Samuels drew up Canada's plan from a template he created for the Vancouver Canucks in their 2011 Stanley Cup final against the Boston Bruins.

"That's an extreme example, because you're coast to coast, Boston to Vancouver," Samuels said. "We take that experience and translate it to this, which is even more extreme." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Refusing to buckle on value of knuckle

New Blue Jays starter R.A. Dickey began toying with the knuckleball in 2005 while with the Texas Rangers and initially struggled with it. But Dickey continued working on the pitch and has enjoyed solid success with it since joining the New York Mets in 2010. MARC SEROTA/GETTY IMAGES FILE

It's quirky, unpredictable and has been described in baseball circles as an oddity and "pitch of last resort."

But the Toronto Blue Jays are banking on R.A. Dickey's dancing knuckleball.

The Jays acquired the National League Cy Young Award winner in a seven-player deal with the Mets on Monday.

Dickey, 38, posted a 20-6 record and 2.73 earned-run average with New York in 2012, but his go-to pitch wasn't a blazing fastball, nasty slider or deep-bending curve. Often he got batters out with the knuckleball, a slow, unassuming pitch that flutters like a butterfly.

By the numbers

4

R.A. Dickey is the fourth pitcher to win the Cy Young only to be traded before the next season, joining David Cone, Pedro Martinez and Roger Clemens.

"This may be a pitch of last resort, which I think is accurate, but think about over history how many last resorts have ended up being successful," Dickey said during a conference call Tuesday. "A lot."

General manager Alex Anthopoulos signed Dickey to a two-year, $25-million US contract extension with a $12-million club option for 2016. Dickey is scheduled to earn $5.25 million in 2013.

"I think Alex should be commended on being able to see past those stereotypical analyzations a lot of guys give the pitch as a gimmick or something that isn't legitimate," Dickey said. "I think we can all admit the past year and the past three years in general have been legitimate."

The good news for Toronto is Dickey started six games against the American League over his three seasons in New York, posting a 4-0 record and 1.71 ERA. THE CANADIAN PRESS

NFL

Judge lowers bond in Cowboy Brent's manslaughter case

A judge ordered Dallas Cowboys nose tackle Josh Brent to wear an electronic monitor pending his trial on an intoxication manslaughter charge in the one-car crash that killed a teammate.

State District Judge Fred Tinsley also lowered Brent's bond from $500,000 US to $100,000 on Tuesday. He ordered Brent not to drink alcohol or drive without a valid driver's licence. Prosecutors say Brent was driving with a suspended licence on the night of the Dec. 8 crash that killed friend and Cowboys practice squad member Jerry Brown. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dallas Cowboys tackle Josh Brent leaves court in Dallas on Tuesday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CFL

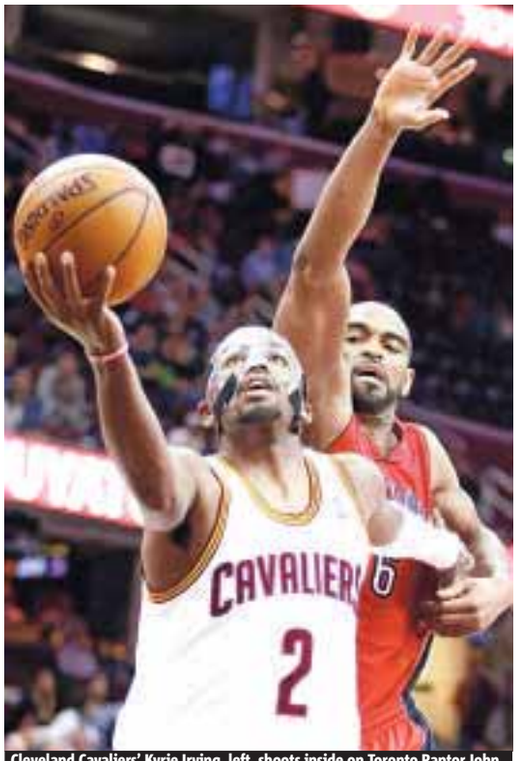
Prefontaine hopes to kick again after Argos ouster

Noel Prefontaine isn't ready to call it a career just yet.

The Toronto Argonauts released the veteran kicker/punter Tuesday, and Prefontaine said he wants to continue his CFL career. He has even hired an agent to beat the bushes for an opportunity with another team.

The move comes less than a month after Prefontaine, who turns 39 on Sunday, helped the Argos defeat the Calgary Stampeders 35-22 in the 100th Grey Cup game in Toronto. Prefontaine was limited to seven regular-season games this year after undergoing major hip surgery in July. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Raps rolling: Toronto snaps road losing streak vs. Cavs



Cleveland Cavaliers' Kyrie Irving, left, shoots inside on Toronto Raptor John Lucas on Tuesday in Cleveland. Irving scored 23 points in the Cavaliers' 113-99 loss to Toronto. MARK DUNCAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NBA. Raptors' first win as visitors since Nov. 13 is also their third victory on the trot

Tuesday's game

Raptors	Cavaliers
113	99

Jose Calderon scored a season-high 23 points, and the Toronto Raptors won on the road for the second time this season by beating the Cleveland Cavaliers 113-99 on Tuesday night.

The Raptors snapped an 11-game skid on the road, winning away from home for the first time since Nov. 13 when they beat Indiana. Toronto, which is 2-14 on the road, has also won three in a row for the first time this season.

Alan Anderson hit three three-pointers in the fourth quarter and finished with 18 points. Amir Johnson scored 17 points and DeMar DeRozan added 16.

Kyrie Irving, coming off a career-high 41 points Saturday, scored 23 points for Cleveland. The reigning rookie of the year, currently playing with a broken bone in his jaw, is wearing a protective mask.

Cavaliers centre Anderson Varejao, the league's leading rebounder, left the game briefly after injuring his right knee in the first quarter. Playing with a sleeve on his knee, Varejao had 22 points and 10 rebounds.

The Raptors have won six of their last eight games against the Cavaliers overall, including each of their last four trips to Cleveland.

Toronto continues to play without centre Andrea Bargnani and guard Kyle Lowry, their second- and third-leading scorers. Both have missed the last four games. Bargnani has an injured right elbow while Lowry has a torn right tricep.

Dion Waiters returned after missing eight games with a sprained left ankle, scoring eight points in 29 minutes. Irving and Waiters were starting together in the backcourt for only the 11th time this season. Irving missed 11 games with a broken left index finger before returning last week. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NHL. Crosby sneaks in as goalie at ball hockey game

Sid the Kid won't let the NHL lockout keep him on the bench, even if it means returning to the game in an unlikely fashion.

The Penguins superstar dropped in on some ball hockey last week, donning the goalie pads and posting a shutout against his aptly named opponents, Flyers Suck.

"It was pretty unbelievable," said Joseph Heaney, who was referee at the DekStar Dekhockey Center in Ohio Township, northwest of Pittsburgh.

"To have the greatest hockey player in the world standing next to you, it's kind of surreal that he's standing right there, playing."

The 24-year-old said Sidney Crosby suited up in the parking lot before the Dec. 14 game. Nobody noticed they were in the presence of celebrity until the dying minutes of the second period, when Heaney ran down the outdoor rink to make an icing call, he said.

"I got the ball from (Crosby), and I was like, 'Oh thanks, man. I don't see you playing goalie for this team usually.' And I looked at his mask, and I was like, 'Holy ...'

"He just started laughing."

"I waited until after the game to tell everybody," added Heaney. "He just wanted to be normal for a change and play with his friends." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Quoted

"I couldn't believe how cool he was."

Ohio Township ball hockey referee James Heaney after Sidney Crosby showed up in showed up to play a game.

Soccer

Messi extends his stay in Barcelona

Lionel Messi agreed on a new contract with Barcelona on Tuesday through 2018.

Messi, the three-time world player of the year, has 90 goals in 2012, surpassing Gerd Mueller's 40-year-old milestone of 85 in a calendar year.

Xavi Hernandez and Carles Puyol also agreed to new deals with the Spanish giant.

In a statement released by the club, Messi, whose contract was due to expire on June 30, 2016, extended his commitment to the club to June 30, 2018. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Six stories to remember

There was victory and heartache as Canadian athletes made headlines around the world in 2012. From no NHL hockey to Ryder Hesjedal's Giro d'Italia triumph, here's a look at some of the top Canadian sports stories of 2012:

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Photos by the Torstar News Service/The Canadian Press/Getty Images

The Lockout

The NHL lockout likely had a bigger impact on more people who watch or make a living off sport than anything else in 2012.

Arenas were dark, players and owners lost hundreds of millions in pay and revenue, bar and restaurant owners scowled at empty seats and fans grumbled and wondered when it was all going to end.

The Penalty

Referee Christiana Pederson's call in an Olympic women's soccer semifinal pretty much had a whole country gnashing its teeth and feeling betrayed.

The call against Canadian goalkeeper Erin McLeod for holding the ball too long — which observers agreed was almost unprecedented — gave the U.S. the break they needed to send the game into extra time and win.

The Tragedy

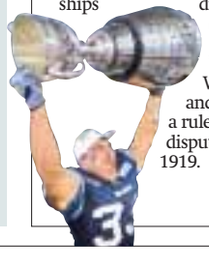
B.C.'s Sarah Burke was the golden girl of freestyle skiing, widely considered a favourite for Olympic gold in 2014, when she crashed and died in January.

Burke was only 29 when she had what looked like an innocuous fall in Park City, Utah, during a halfpipe training run. It ruptured an artery that carries blood to the brain and renewed calls to look at safety in the sport.

The Cup

The Grey Cup game celebrated its centennial in 2012 with a party in Toronto made even sweeter by the home team's victory

The first cup was awarded to the University of Toronto Varsity Blues in 1909. It only hit its centennial in terms of games in 2012 because of missed championships due to the First World War and a rules dispute in 1919.



The Cyclist

In a year when cycling suffered its biggest black eye ever with the Lance Armstrong doping scandal, there was one shining story for Canadian cyclists — Ryder Hesjedal's win at the Giro d'Italia.

In May, the Victoria native became the first Canadian ever to win one of cycling's three Grand Tour events.

The Trade

The mammoth 12-player trade with the Miami Marlins was designed to turn the Toronto Blue Jays into a pennant contender and it left Miami fans wondering where their team was headed.

Toronto walked away with all-star shortstop Jose Reyes, pitchers Mark Buehrle and Josh Johnson, catcher John Buck and infielder-outfielader Emilio Bonifacio.

Just another toy among thousands? Some car buffs beg to differ. HANDOUT

Pop open a wheelie

AUTO PILOT
Mike Goetz
drive@metronews.ca

The golden olden days. Hobby-grade slot cars continue their cult status with children and adults alike

Christmas morning is always fun. But it can never be as fun as it was on those magical Christmas mornings, when you were in your prime toy- yearning years.

First you don't get the Santa thing. Then, Santa and Christmas morning are everything. Then you gradually get jaded by the whole thing and start getting up later and later on Christmas morning. The window is actually quite small for really getting into it, but when you're into it, you're into it hard.

And it was in that glorious window that Santa once dropped off for me the actual Eldon slot car racing set I feverishly desired.

Net result: best Christmas present ever.

I still have the two slot cars that came with the set — an original Ford Mustang Fastback and a Chevrolet Corvette Stingray Coupe.

Back then (the mid-to-late 1960s), slot car racing sets were one of the prime Christmas toys for boys.

"You'd go to an Eaton's store back then, and there would be four or five tracks set up for kids to play and try," remembers Ernie Mossetti, who has been a slot car retailer since 1988, and a slot car aficionado virtually all his life. "I was born in 1956, and got my first slot car in 1964."

The slot car's reign on top of the toy kingdom didn't last long. Mossetti says things were pretty much over by the late '60s.

Slot car sets are now just another toy among thousands. But "hobby grade" slot cars continue their cult status with adult aficionados, and some young folks as well.

Mossetti currently operates two slot car related concerns — raceworldcanada.com and mr.slotcar.ca — the former's an online store and the latter a line of professional grade slot cars designed by Mossetti (he's an industrial designer by trade). He notes that sets from Germany's Carrera and Britain's Scalextric continue to dominate the current market.

Mossetti says kids don't get exposed to the slot car world like they used to — there is little advertising or promotion. And these days, you have to go to a hobby store or an online store to get your actual slot car stuff.

"Fortunately there are still enough dads out there who had one, and who want to buy a set for their kids … Or say they are buying the set for their kids."

Ouch, I resemble that last remark.

Slot car sets are still a sought-after gift, even in our high-tech age. ISTOCK

Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
You can be as adventurous as you please now, knowing that nothing bad will come of it. Make use of the Sun's final few days in sympathetic Sagittarius to have fun. Forget about yesterday, it's today that matters.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
Money may be a little tight at the moment but that is no reason to deny yourself the good things in life. On the contrary, you will feel better about yourself if you splash out a bit — but not too much.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Thought may be your natural medium but with love planet Venus moving through the relationship area of your chart you want to express yourself not only mentally but romantically too. Give the object of your affection your full attention.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
If you need help, you must ask for it. No one will think any the less of you if you request assistance. On the contrary, they will admire your maturity. Neither success nor self-worth have anything to do with separation.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
The more you have been working on serious things, the more you owe it to yourself to have some fun. Social activities, as well as an affair of the heart, will bring you a great deal of pleasure over the next 24 hours.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Today's rather unusual events will convince you that important objectives can only be reached if you are prepared to meet other people halfway. That applies not only to your allies but to your rivals too.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Most of the time your head rules your heart, but today the opposite will be true. You will allow your feelings to dictate what you say and do. Nothing bad will come of it. In fact, you will thoroughly enjoy yourself.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 2 04 - Nov. 22
Calm down and stop taking what other people say so seriously. Yes, of course, some individuals can be a complete pain but if you let them upset you it means they have won. It's life — learn to laugh at it.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Take your pleasures where you find them and don't give a thought to what is going on around you. Is that irresponsible? Some people may think so but you have done your bit for world peace — now you want a piece of the action.

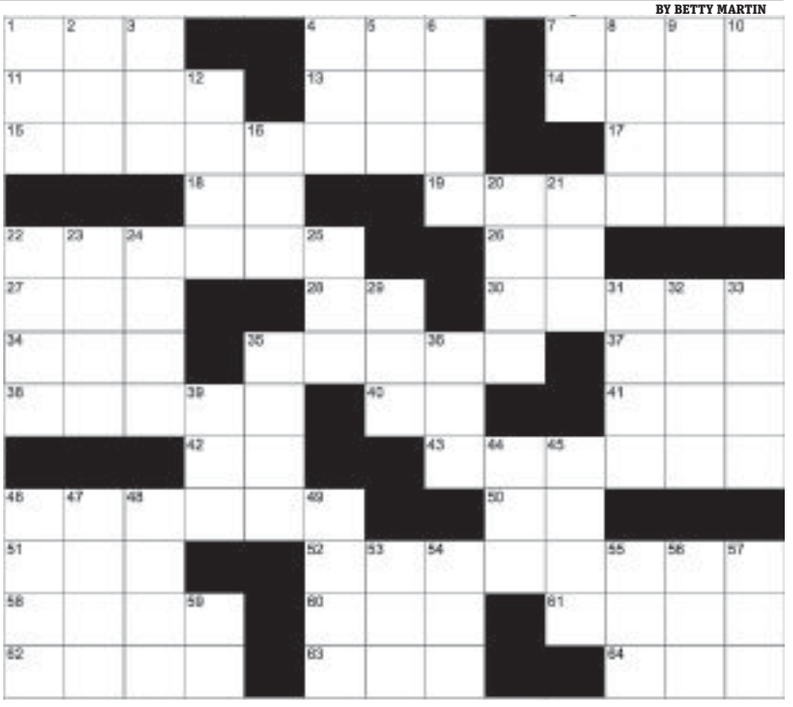
♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Most of the time you think and behave rationally but the planets warn that your feelings could get the better of you today. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that so long as they are positive and loving feelings.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Stick to what you do best and don't let others involve you in things you have next to no interest in. There is only so much that any one person can do and you'll do your bit better if it inspires you.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
You will find yourself up against someone who speaks and acts a bit too aggressively today but you must not react in kind. Smile, talk softly and reasonably and let them see you are beyond their reach. You win. SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword

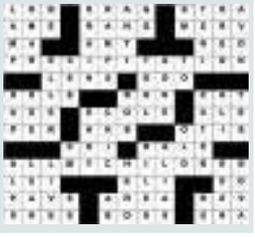
BY BETTY MARTIN



Across
1. Package request (abbr.)
4. Breakfast choice
7. Headliner
11. Extremely dry
13. Seminary subj.
14. Skin opening
15. Renounce
17. "Far out!"
18. Trucker's radio, for short
19. Occasions
22. Rate
26. Little Rock st.
27. Victory sign
28. Exclamation of surprise
30. At no time
34. Writer Levin
35. Whacks, as a housefly
37. Silkworm
38. Perry Mason's secretary
40. Musical note
41. Toss out
42. Knight of Grey's Anatomy
43. Busy – - — (3 words)
46. Archie Bunker's offspring
50. – the World Turns
51. Cut back
52. Careless
58. General vicinity
60. Battery sz.
61. Church section
62. Car mishap
63. Skillet
64. Pouch

Down
1. Canadian Auto Association
2. Sphere
3. "I Know What You — Last Summer"
4. Long, long time
5. — Smart
6. Jane Lynch series
7. She played Emily Hartley on The Bob Newhart Show (init.)
8. Severed
9. I smell - — (2 words)
10. Lipstick colours
12. Recipe direction
16. Survivor network
20. Moving vehicles
21. Sooner than, poetically
22. Eager
23. Dried
24. Circus barker
25. Farm mother
29. Sandwich filler
31. Part of speech
32. A great lake
33. Take the subway
35. Indian dress
36. — Maria (coffee liqueur)
39. Common paper sz.
44. Tree fluid
45. Business abbr.
46. Pleased
47. Knowledge
48. — Mike with Mike Bullard
49. Memo abbr.
53. Half a Teletubbie
54. McShane or Ziering
55. The Hour — 22 Minutes
56. Eggs
57. Winter mo.
59. One Day – a Time

Yesterday's Crossword



What's online

See today's answers metronews.ca/answers.

Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

		9	3					
3		4						
	7			8			5	4
5					9	8	4	
		1		2		6		
	2	6	4					9
7	9			3			8	
						7		5
					1	2		

Yesterday's Sudoku

7	1	8	3	6	2	9	5	4
9	4	2	7	5	8	6	1	3
6	3	5	4	1	9	8	7	2
1	8	9	2	7	4	3	6	5
3	7	4	5	8	6	1	2	9
2	5	6	9	3	1	4	8	7
5	6	7	8	4	3	2	9	1
4	2	1	6	9	5	7	3	8
8	9	3	1	2	7	5	4	6

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